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Europe's Joint Aviation Authorities (JAA), which comprise the aviation regulatory authorities of 27 countries, today recommended type validation of the Boeing Next-Generation 737-700. Actual type certificates will be awarded by the individual countries.

The validation recommendation formally recognizes that the 737-700 has passed the stringent design and testing requirements mandated by the JAA and is ready to enter passenger service with airlines throughout Europe. The 737-700 was awarded type certification by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on Nov. 7, 1997, clearing the airplane for passenger service within the United States.

"This is a proud day for all of the employees who've worked so hard over the past few years on the Next-Generation 737-700 program," said Jack Gucker, vice president -- 737/757 Derivatives. "Together with the JAA and FAA, we have put the 737-700 through one of the most comprehensive and rigorous flight-testing and certification processes in history. This certification is a significant validation of the airplane's safety, reliability, performance and readiness to enter passenger service. It allows us to proceed with our first deliveries to European airlines -- the first two of which are to Maersk and Germania."

More than 20,000 engineering laboratory and airplane flight tests were completed before certification was awarded. The 128-to-149-seat 737-700 began its nine-month flight-test program Feb. 9, 1997. The total certification flight-testing effort involved four 737-700 airplanes, which completed nearly 1,600 flights; 2,220 hours of ground testing and 2,000 hours of flight testing.

The 737-700 program was launched in November 1993 when Southwest Airlines ordered 63 of the airplanes. The first 737-700 was delivered to Southwest in December 1997.

In addition to the 737-700, the Next-Generation 737 airplane family also includes the 160-to-189-passenger 737-800; the 110-to-132-passenger 737-600; and the recently launched 177-to-189-passenger 737-900.

Each of these airplanes will participate in separate flight-testing and certification programs. When completed, the total Next-Generation 737 flight-test program will have comprised 12 airplanes, including the four 737-700s, three 737-800s, three 737-600s and two 737-900s. When completed, the flight-test program will have totaled more than 3,500 in-flight test hours.

Currently, flight-testing on the 737-800 is under way, with certification expected during the first quarter of 1998 and delivery to launch customer Hapag-Lloyd of Germany to follow shortly thereafter.

The 737-600 made its first flight in January. The airplane's certification and delivery to launch customer Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) are scheduled for mid-1998.

The flight-testing and certification schedule for the 737-900 program is being finalized. Alaska Airlines is scheduled to take delivery of the first 737-900 in 2001.

In addition to commercial airplanes, Boeing also offers a business jet derived from the 737-700. With auxiliary fuel tanks, the business jet can fly more than 6,000 nautical miles. The business jet is sold and marketed through Boeing Business Jets, a joint venture formed in 1996 between The Boeing Company and General Electric Co. The first business jet is scheduled to roll out in mid-1998, followed by certification later in the year.

The Next-Generation 737 airplane family is designed to fly higher, farther, faster and quieter than previous 737 models. Changes from earlier models include a new larger wing, higher cruise speed, greater range and new engines with improvements in noise, fuel burn, thrust and maintenance costs. In addition, the new engines benefit the environment through lower emissions.

The Next-Generation 737 family continues to be the fastest-selling jetliner model in history. Since the program's launch, 38 customers have placed orders for 811 Next-Generation 737s.

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